

**Probation Services Task Force  
Roundtable Discussion Notes  
Family Violence Conference  
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Los Angeles, CA**

Task Force Members/Staff:

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Approximate No. of Participants: 10

***Themes:***

- *DPOs need more formal and extensive training, especially in DV issues.*
- *Need for collaborative statewide effort to train DPOs*
- *Probation needs to collaborate with other county agencies to be successful.*
- *Small intensive supervision caseloads successful, but require lot of DPO time.*
- *Probation's scope needs to expand to serve victims and offenders with wraparound services*
- *High turnover – DPOs need competitive salaries and benefits*
- *Relationship between DPO and probationer is very important.*
- *DPOs work for many masters*
- *CPO should be appointed by the courts, funded by the state*
- *Need for workload ratios and standards*

**Domestic Violence Researcher**

- Probation has been given a big job from PC 1203.097
- Caseloads too heavy
- Lack of training for DPOs because of such high turnover
- There are not enough resources to adequately train DPOs
- Counties conduct individual DPO training

**Probation Manager**

- Their county received a training grant for DPOs in domestic violence issues through a college; DV advocates and DPOs from all over the state attended.
- DPOs need formal and more extensive training
- DPOs should be trained by victim advocates and coordinators of batterers treatment programs.

**DPO with DV caseload**

- Manual of best training practices was developed at grant-funded training session; was the first time such a manual had been created.
- High turnover is caused by the high stress level of a DV DPO.
- Probation has the most information related to domestic violence treatment programs.

**Domestic Violence Researcher**

- Meetings between counties are needed to establish standards

- Probation departments need money to hire expert training consultants

#### **DPO with DV caseload**

- Just took over DV caseload – is trained by supervisor
- The District Attorney, victim/witness advocates, and DPOs are beginning to evaluate programs together; the group meets weekly to collaborate.
  - This system should be statewide
- Feels lucky – has intensive DV caseload of only 40; most DPOs have caseloads of 200 or more.
- No tolerance DV caseload is very intense; DPO is on call 24 hours/day, victims call in to report on status of offender; the program is effective, though.

#### **Probation Manager**

- In charge of DPO certification
- DPOs are not traditionally trained in DV issues
- DPOs have to work beyond their trained area of expertise
- 5 DPOs have intensive DV caseloads of 70 – starting to see good results, but needs to be more collaborative between agencies and throughout the state, and more intensive.

#### **DPO with DV caseload (former Juvenile DPO)**

- Probation department has vertical and horizontal collaboration – DPOs work with other officers at other levels of supervision and experience, and they collaborate with Mental Health to get wraparound services.
- Probation department starting to work with other social service agencies.

#### **Domestic Violence Researcher**

- Resource and training issues
- Need community role in criminal justice system
- Probation's scope needs to expand to serve victims and offenders with wraparound services
- Probation needs to have an interdisciplinary approach

#### **DV Probation Unit Manager**

- Their county uses Santa Barbara's risk management assessment tool
- Caseloads have increased over time
- A case manager started certifying programs that worked, but has since stopped since lack of staff resources
- Hard to recruit and retain enough qualified probation staff
- Doesn't feel qualified to evaluate programs and models
- Has a conflict of interest – can't audit and evaluate programs
  - Would be beneficial to have state organization that audits programs, so individual counties don't have to do them.
  - Need technical support from outside department.

#### **DPO (responding to manager)**

- Probation officers need to go to programs unannounced to evaluate them in order to get results/maintain standards

- Their department uses Santa Clara's program evaluation standards

#### **DPO**

- Probation department has a manual, but no standards that lay out what the programs are supposed to accomplish
- Inadequate DPO training
- DPOs are allowed to be present in treatment programs to answer client questions, etc.

#### **DPO**

- DPOs not allowed to be present in treatment programs in their county.

#### **DPO with DV caseload**

- Turnover not as high in their county
- Spouses and children of probationers come to DPOs with problems; DPO meets with victims at least once a month, probationers twice a month.

#### **DPO**

- More funding is necessary to pay DPOs more
- Probation's success depends largely on which service providers it partners with
- Collaboration between agencies is needed

#### **DPO**

- DPOs need competitive salaries and benefits; probation loses many DPOs to federal probation and parole, which pay about \$20,000/year more than probation.
  - Probation can't even compete at recruiting events
  - Service demands are huge but DPO salaries do not pay well
- Every DV offender in the county has a DPO

#### **DPO**

- County has children's system of care – made up of interdisciplinary teams between DSS and probation
- Collaboration with DSS is awkward because probation officers make 15-20% less than social workers

#### **Domestic Violence Researcher**

- Probation is losing DPOs

#### **DPO**

- A federal prison just opened in her county; losing DPOs because of better salaries and benefits

#### **DPO**

- He is the fourth DPO in two years to takeover a DV caseload

#### **DPO**

- Department has good relationships with the courts because DPOs are in the courts (court officers), and the judges take the DPO's opinions into account.
- Probation works well with CPS and employment development programs

**Probation Manager**

- Who will appoint the CPO? The CAO can't be the person since a CAO's job is to keep costs down:
- When the economy worsens, the first question asked is usually, "which programs are mandated?"
  - Supervision levels are discretionary; supervision gets cut in the budget because it is not mandated.
- Not much money goes to domestic violence caseloads, until there are several DV-related homicides.
- Arizona has mandated caseload ratios, where they automatically get an additional officer if the ratio is exceeded; CA should look into AZ system.

**DPO**

- CPO meets weekly with the PJ; they find money to get DPOs (they have 5 DPOs from mental health money)
  - Collaboration is essential
- Probation has developed a system of care for adults and juveniles in collaboration with DSS

**Probation Manager**

- Department collaborates a lot with DSS and Mental Health, but mainly in juvenile probation.
- Receive Modernization Fund money through TANF and Medi-Cal for adult probation

**DPO**

- Probation gets grants but they can't use them because they can't fill probation positions.
- Because of staff shortages, only the most high risk cases can be supervised – others have to be banked.
- A DPO's relationship with probationers is what matters most in terms of a probationer's progress.

**DPO**

- DPOs report to many bosses – CPPA, the county, the courts

**Domestic Violence Researcher**

- Probation is an arm of the court – it should be funded by the state.
- Does not want the BOS to appoint CPO.

**DPO**

- Department moved from courts to BOS appointment of the CPO
  - This caused a problem in that probation was pulled away from the courts.
- Need to decide who appoints CPO.

**DPO**

- Charter counties make it difficult to decide who should appoint the CPO
- DPOs feel like they have two bosses.

**DPO**

- In order to maintain the ability to have a visionary CPO, the courts need to appoint the CPO; the BOS just want to increase the real estate value of the county.

**Domestic Violence Researcher**

(responding to question from staff regarding juvenile DV programs)

- San Francisco has a specialized court for juvenile DV cases.